

PAYING TRIBUTE TO HENRY
BERNARD DANNELS

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2001

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a solemn heart that I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the life and memory of a valuable member of the community of Estes Park, Colorado. Henry Bernard Dannels died recently, at the age of seventy-eight. He was a kind mind with a caring heart and will surely be missed by all those whom Henry knew.

Mr. Dannels was born in Longmont, Colorado in 1923. As a teenager, he moved with his family to Estes Park where he attended high school. He later went on to graduate from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley after which he began his public service. Dannels served as a Lieutenant and Commanding Officer in the Navy during World War II in the Pacific theatre. After returning to Colorado, Henry became a fixture for the youth in his community, volunteering for the Boy Scouts of America as a Cubmaster, Scoutmaster and Explorer Advisor. In recognition of his efforts, he was honored with the Silver Beaver Award from the Boy Scouts of America as well as the Golden Key Award from the City of Estes Park.

Henry's true dedication and service to his community began in 1972. Following in his father's footsteps, he was elected as a town trustee for Estes Park. He served as a town trustee until he was elected Mayor in 1984. Mr. Dannels served as a dedicated and caring Mayor until his retirement in 1996. Prior to retiring, he established a long list of achievements. His efforts and accomplishments did not go unnoticed. December 18, 1992 was named "Mayor Bernie's Day."

Mr. Speaker, Henry was a great asset to the people and the town of Estes Park, Colorado. He fought for Americans in the Pacific as well as in City Hall. My thoughts and prayers go out to Mr. Dannels' friends and family during these trying times. Henry's efforts will serve as a benchmark for those who follow his lead and his contributions will not be forgotten.

SLOVAK PARLIAMENT NARROWLY
DEFEATS REPEAL OF CRIMINAL
DEFAMATION PROVISIONS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2001

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, on November 8, Slovak Parliamentarian Tomas Galbavy, a member of the ruling Slovak Democratic Coalition, introduced an amendment to the Slovak penal code which would repeal articles that make defamation of certain public officials a crime. My fellow parliamentarian made an important stand at a time when many seem to believe that free speech is an expendable luxury. As Co-Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I commend Deputy Galbavy for his efforts to strengthen one of the most important cornerstones of democracy.

The criminalization of slander, libel or defamation, as well as laws which purport to pro-

tect public officials or bodies from "insult," is a longstanding concern of Members of the Helsinki Commission. In fact, I have repeatedly raised concern about the use—or, more correctly—abuse of such laws. Most recently, at Commission hearings in September and October, I expressed concern about the use of such laws in the current crackdown on independent media in Azerbaijan. In November, "Insult laws" were again used as an excuse to close an independent paper in Azerbaijan. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, as an elected politician, I get "insulted" every day of the week—and twice on Sunday. It's part of the job.

I am not alone in my views. At OSCE meetings, the United States has repeatedly called for such laws to be repealed. Similarly, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the Organization of American States Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression issued a joint statement in February 2000 which concluded that "criminal defamation laws should be abolished."

Simply put, Mr. Speaker, Slovakia's current criminal defamation law—a holdover from a bygone era—is not consistent with the international commitments and obligations it has undertaken as a free and independent state. I am particularly concerned that journalist Alex Kratky has been charged with a criminal offense for criticizing a speech delivered by Slovak President Schuster. If found guilty, Kratky faces two years in prison for his opinions.

Unfortunately, the Galbavy amendment was defeated by the narrowest of margins, failing by just one vote. Although Deputy Speaker Pavol Hrusovksy voted in favor of the amendment, most of the other parliamentary leaders either abstained or did not participate in the vote. The Slovak Parliament came so close to doing the right thing, so close to demonstrating the kind of regional leadership so desperately needed, but stopped short by one vote.

I know the Slovak Parliament has a great deal of work before it now, and I particularly appreciate the work of the Parliament and the Government in supporting the war on terrorism and their efforts to ensure that U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373 is fully implemented. At the same time, I believe that there are still opportunities for Slovakia to act on the important human rights issue of criminal defamation.

First, the Constitutional Court could declare the provisions of Articles 102, 103 and 206 unconstitutional—especially bearing in mind, as Deputy Minister Lubomir Fogas has noted, Slovakia's Constitution gives priority to Slovakia's international human rights obligations. I hope, however, that Slovakia's elected leaders will not wait for the court to act, since that can take a long time. Instead the initiative could be reconsidered and, with a few more Deputies voting to repeal defamation and libel from the criminal code, Slovakia would set an example for other countries to emulate.

IN SUPPORT OF MEGAN SMITH,
2002 WINTER OLYMPICS TORCH
RUNNER FOR THE SIXTH CON-
GRESSIONAL DISTRICT

HON. NANCY L. JOHNSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2001

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Megan Smith, an outstanding young citizen from my home town of New Britain, Connecticut. Megan is an excellent student, exceptional athlete and is highly esteemed by her peers for her positive attitude, considerate nature and high standards. For possessing these characteristics, Megan has been given the great honor of being selected as a 2002 Winter Olympics Torch Runner for my district.

Her accomplishments speak for themselves. Megan is ranked in the top five percent of her class, and deftly balances this commitment to her studies with an equally strong commitment to her athletics. She is a top player on her school's volleyball and basketball teams, and has already been accepted to Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut, on a full basketball scholarship beginning next fall.

Despite her rigorous schedule, Megan devotes many hours to performing community service work. She divides her time between Gaffney School's special education preschool program; St. Francis Middle School's basketball activities; and at tryouts and practices for the Connecticut Starters 10 National Team. Because of Megan's leadership, scholarship, character and service to her community, she was inducted into New Britain High School's Chapter of the National Honor Society and also was designated the female recipient of the Wendy's High School Heisman Scholar Athlete Award.

I cannot think of a better person to represent the Sixth Congressional District during the Olympic Torch run. Megan is an exemplary young woman whose giving heart and extraordinary talents will bring her much success. I salute Megan Smith for her invaluable contributions to her school and to her community. Congratulations.

REPRESENTATIVE GEORGE MIL-
LER PRESENTS WWII VETERAN
NICK COMINOS WITH MEDAL OF
HONOR

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 6, 2001

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I had the honor of joining the family and friends of WWII Veteran Nick Cominos in a ceremony to present several medals on Saturday, December 1, 2001, just days before the 60th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. These medals are a long-overdue recognition of his heroic efforts in the Dalmatian Islands and Greece as part of a covert reconnaissance operation that led to the retreat of the Nazis from the area in 1944.

Federal military decorations are awarded to members of the armed forces exhibiting valor and self-sacrifice, the heroic acts of Mr. Nick Cominos are worthy of such an honor.